

3.8 Hydrology/Water Quality

This section provides a description of existing water resources within the project area and pertinent local, state, and federal plans and policies. Each subsection includes descriptions of existing hydrology/drainage, existing flooding hazards, and the environmental impacts on hydrology and water quality resulting from implementation of the proposed project, and mitigation measures where appropriate. The impact assessment provides an evaluation of potential adverse effects to water quality based on criteria derived from CEQA Guidelines in conjunction with actions proposed in Chapter 2, Project Description.

Information for this section is summarized from the *Water Quality Management Plan and Hydrological Evaluation* prepared by Stantec. These reports are included in Appendix J and K of this EIR, respectively.

3.8.1 Existing Conditions

The project site is located in the Imperial Valley Planning Area of the Colorado River Basin. The Colorado River Basin Region covers approximately 13 million acres (20,000 square miles) in the southeastern portion of California. It includes all of Imperial County and portions of San Bernardino, Riverside, and San Diego Counties. The Colorado River Basin Region is divided into seven major planning areas on the basis of different economic and hydrologic characteristics (California RWQCB 2019).

The project site is contained within the Brawley Hydrologic Area in the Imperial Hydrologic Unit (HU 723.10). The Imperial Valley is characterized as a closed basin and, therefore, all runoff generated within the watershed discharges into the Salton Sea (Appendix J of this EIR).

The project area is characterized by a typical desert climate with dry, warm winters, and hot, dry summers. Most of the rainfall occurs in conjunction with monsoonal conditions between May and September, with an average annual rainfall of less than 3 inches for the project area. The 10-year, 24-hour estimated precipitation amount is 1.87 inches; and the 100-year, 24-hour estimated precipitation is 3.70 inches (Appendix J of this EIR).

Localized Drainage Conditions

The project site and the surrounding terrain is generally flat and slopes down in a southwest direction at approximately 1.5 percent. Currently, off-site storm water runoff runs through the project site. The upstream tributary storm drainage area extends approximately 0.85 miles northeast of the project to the existing Coachella Canal. The storm water runoff eventually drains into the East Highline Canal (Appendix J of this EIR).

Flooding

According to FEMA's FIRM (Map Number 06025C0425C) (FEMA 2008), the proposed solar energy facility, gen-tie line, and access roads located on the western portion of the project site are located in Zone X (unshaded). The FEMA Zone X (unshaded) designation is an area determined to be outside the 0.2 percent annual chance floodplain.

According to the FEMA FIRM (Map Number 06025C0450C) (FEMA 2008), the proposed eastern access road that would connect to Gas Line Road is located in a 100-year flood zone (Zone A).

Surface Water Quality

The surface waters of the Imperial Valley depend primarily on the inflow of irrigation water from the Colorado River via the All-American Canal. Excessive salinity concentrations have long been one of the major water quality problems of the Colorado River, a municipal and industrial water source to millions of people, and a source of irrigation water for approximately 700,000 acres of farmland. The heavy salt load in the Colorado River results from both natural and human activities. Land use and water resources are unequivocally linked. A variety of natural and human factors can affect the quality and use of streams, lakes, and rivers. Surface waters may be impacted from a variety of point and non-point discharges. Examples of point sources may include wastewater treatment plants, industrial discharges, or any other type of discharge from a specific location (commonly a large-diameter pipe) into a stream or water body. In contrast, non-point source pollutant sources are generally more diffuse in nature and connected to a cumulative contribution of multiple smaller sources. There are no comprehensive water quality monitoring stations located within in the project site, and water quality data are limited (Appendix J of this EIR).

Common non-point source contaminants within the project area may include, but are not limited to: sediment, nutrients (phosphorous and nitrogen), trace metals (e.g., lead, zinc, copper, nickel, iron, cadmium, and mercury), oil and grease, bacteria (e.g., coliform), viruses, pesticides and herbicides, organic matter, and solid debris/litter. Vehicles account for most of the heavy metals, fuel and fuel additives (e.g., benzene), motor oil, lubricants, coolants, rubber, battery acid, and other substances. Nutrients result from excessive fertilizing of agricultural areas, while pesticides and herbicides are widely used in agricultural fields and roadway shoulders for keeping right-of-way (ROW) areas clear of vegetation and pests. Additionally, the use of on-site septic systems for wastewater disposal can degrade shallow groundwater by contributing nitrate. All these substances are entrained by runoff during wet weather and discharged into local drain facilities and eventually into the Salton Sea (Appendix J of this EIR).

Based on the 305(b)/303(d) Integrated Report prepared by the Colorado River Basin RWQCB, the following water features within the Brawley Hydrologic Area includes the Imperial Valley Drains (Wistaria Drain and Greeson Wash), New River, and the Salton Sea (Appendix J of this EIR). Specific impairments listed for each of these water bodies (or Category 5) are identified below:

- Imperial Valley Drains: Impaired for chlordane, dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), dieldrin, endosulfan, PCBs, sedimentation/siltation; toxaphene, and selenium;
- New River: Impaired for chlordane, chlorpyrifos, copper, DDT, diazinon, dieldrin, Hexachlorobenzene, mercury, nutrients, organic enrichment/low dissolved oxygen, PCBs, pathogens, sediment, selenium, toxicity, toxaphene, trash, and zinc;
- Salton Sea: Impaired for arsenic, chlorpyrifos, DDT, enterococcus, nutrients, salinity, and selenium (Appendix J of this EIR).

In relation to the Imperial Valley Drains, the listings for DDT, dieldrin, and, endosulfan only apply to drains that are not responsible for draining the immediate project site (Appendix J of this EIR).

Groundwater Hydrology

The project site is located in the East Salton Sea Groundwater Basin (Basin 7-033). The basin occupies the northeastern margin of the Imperial Valley, including the East Mesa, and alluvial surficial deposits of the Chocolate Mountains. The basin covers 279,824 acres. Adjacent basins include

Chocolate Valley to the north, Arroyo Seco Valley to the east, Amos Valley to the southeast, and Imperial Valley to the south. No groundwater basin is defined in the footprint of the Salton Sea (Appendix K of this EIR).

Groundwater quality in the East Salton Sea Basin is generally reported as poor and not suitable for domestic, municipal, or agricultural purposes (Appendix K of this EIR).

3.8.2 Regulatory Setting

This section identifies and summarizes laws, policies, and regulations that are applicable to the project.

Federal

Clean Water Act

The U.S. EPA is the lead federal agency responsible for managing water quality. The CWA of 1972 is the primary federal law that governs and authorizes the U.S. EPA and the states to implement activities to control water quality. The various elements of the CWA that address water quality and that are applicable to the project are discussed below. Wetland protection elements administered by the USACE under Section 404 of the CWA, including permits for the discharge of dredged and/or fill material into waters of the United States, are discussed in Section 3.4, Biological Resources.

Under federal law, the U.S.EPA has published water quality regulations under Volume 40 of the CFR. Section 303 of the CWA requires states to adopt water quality standards for all surface waters of the U.S. As defined by the CWA, water quality standards consist of two elements: (1) designated beneficial uses of the water body in question; and (2) criteria that protect the designated uses. Section 304(a) requires the U.S.EPA to publish advisory water quality criteria that accurately reflect the latest scientific knowledge on the kind and extent of all effects on health and welfare that may be expected from the presence of pollutants in water. Where multiple uses exist, water quality standards must protect the most sensitive use. The U.S. EPA is the federal agency with primary authority for implementing regulations adopted under the CWA. The U.S.EPA has delegated the State of California the authority to implement and oversee most of the programs authorized or adopted for CWA compliance through the Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act of 1969 (Porter-Cologne Act), described below.

Under CWA Section 401, applicants for a federal license or permit to conduct activities that may result in the discharge of a pollutant into waters of the U.S. must obtain a water quality certification from the SWRCB in which the discharge would originate or, if appropriate, from the interstate water pollution control agency with jurisdiction over affected waters at the point where the discharge would originate.

CWA Section 402 establishes the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program to control point source discharges from industrial, municipal, and other facilities if their discharges go directly to surface waters. The 1987 amendments to the CWA created a new section of the CWA devoted to regulating storm water or nonpoint source discharges (Section 402[p]). The U.S.EPA has granted California primacy in administering and enforcing the provisions of the CWA and the NPDES program through the SWRCB. The SWRCB is responsible for issuing both general and individual permits for discharges from certain activities. At the local and regional levels, general and individual permits are administered by RWQCBs.

Clean Water Act Section 303(d) Impaired Waters List

CWA Section 303(d) requires states to develop lists of water bodies that will not attain water quality standards after implementation of minimum required levels of treatment by point-source dischargers.

Section 303(d) requires states to develop a total maximum daily load (TMDL) for each of the listed pollutants and water bodies. A TMDL is the amount of loading that the water body can receive and still be in compliance with applicable water quality objectives and applied beneficial uses. TMDLs can also act as a planning framework for reducing loadings of a specific pollutant from various sources to achieve compliance with water quality objectives. TMDLs prepared by the state must include an allocation of allowable loadings to point and nonpoint sources, with consideration of background loadings and a margin of safety. The TMDL must also include an analysis that shows links between loading reductions and the attainment of water quality objectives.

National Flood Insurance Program

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administers the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to provide subsidized flood insurance to communities that comply with FEMA regulations that limit development in floodplains. FEMA also issues Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) that identify which land areas are subject to flooding. These maps provide flood information and identify flood hazard zones in the community. The design standard for flood protection covered by the FIRM is established by FEMA, with the minimum level of flood protection for new development determined to be the 1-in-100 (0.01) annual exceedance probability) (i.e., the 100-year flood event).

State

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act

The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act, also known as the California Water Code, is California's statutory authority for the protection of water quality. Under this act, the state must adopt water quality policies, plans, and objectives that protect the state's waters. The act sets forth the obligations of the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and RWQCBs pertaining to the adoption of Water Quality Control Plans and establishment of water quality objectives. Unlike the CWA, which regulates only surface water, the Porter-Cologne Act regulates both surface water and groundwater.

Water Quality Control Plan for the Colorado River Basin

The Water Quality Control Plan for the Colorado River Basin (or Basin Plan) prepared by the Colorado River RWQCB (Region 7) identifies beneficial uses of surface waters within the Colorado River Basin region, establishes quantitative and qualitative water quality objectives for protection of beneficial uses, and establishes policies to guide the implementation of these water quality objectives.

Water bodies that have beneficial uses that may be affected by construction activity and post-construction activity include the Imperial Valley Drains (includes the Wistaria Drain and Greeson Wash), New River, and the Salton Sea. Table 3.8-1 identifies the designated beneficial uses established for the project site's receiving waters. The following are definitions of the applicable beneficial uses:

- Aquaculture (AQUA) – Uses of water for aquaculture or mariculture operations including, but not limited to, propagation, cultivation, maintenance, or harvesting of aquatic plants and animals for human consumption or bait purposes.
- Freshwater Replenishment (FRSH) – Uses of water for natural or artificial maintenance of surface water quantity or quality.



- Industrial Service Supply (IND) – Uses of water for industrial activities that do not depend primarily on water quality including, but not limited to, mining, cooling water supply, hydraulic conveyance, gravel washing, fire protection, and oil well repressurization.
- Water Contact Recreation (REC I) – Uses of water for recreational activities involving body contact with water, where ingestion of water is reasonably possible. These uses include, but are not limited to, swimming, wading, water-skiing, skin and scuba diving, surfing, white water activities, fishing, and use of natural hot springs.
- Non-contact Water Recreation (REC II) – Uses of water for recreational activities involving proximity to water, but not normally involving contact with water where ingestion of water is reasonably possible. These uses include, but are not limited to, picnicking, sunbathing, hiking, beachcombing, camping, boating, tide pool and marine life study, hunting, sightseeing, or aesthetic enjoyment in conjunction with the above activities.
- Warm Freshwater Habitat (WARM) – Uses of water that support warm water ecosystems including, but not limited to, preservation or enhancement of aquatic habitats, vegetation, fish, or wildlife, including invertebrates.
- Wildlife Habitat (WILD) – Uses of water that support terrestrial ecosystems including, but not limited to, the preservation and enhancement of terrestrial habitats, vegetation, wildlife (e.g., mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates), or wildlife water and food sources.
- Preservation of Rare, Threatened, or Endangered Species (RARE) – Uses of water that support habitats necessary, at least in part, for the survival and successful maintenance of plant or animal species established under state or federal law as rare, threatened or endangered.

Table 3.8-1. Beneficial Uses of Receiving Waters

Beneficial Uses	Imperial Valley Drains	New River	Salton Sea
AQUA	--	--	X
FRSH	X	X	--
IND	--	P	P
REC I	X	X	X
REC II	X	X	X
WARM	X	X	X
WILD	X	X	X
RARE	X	X	X

Source: SWRCB 2019

AQUA=aquaculture; FRSH=freshwater replenishment; IND=industrial service supply; P=Potential Uses; RARE=Preservation of Rare, Threatened, or Endangered Species; REC I= water contact recreation; REC II=non-contact water recreation; WARM=Warm Freshwater Habitat; WILD=Wildlife Habitat; X=existing beneficial uses

National Pollution Discharge Elimination System General Industrial and Construction Permits

The NPDES General Industrial Permit requirements apply to the discharge of stormwater associated with industrial sites. The permit requires implementation of management measures that will achieve the performance standard of the best available technology economically achievable and best conventional pollutant control technology. Under the statute, operators of new facilities must implement industrial BMPs in the projects’ SWPPP and perform monitoring of stormwater discharges and unauthorized non–stormwater discharges.

Construction activities are regulated under the NPDES General Permit for Discharges of Storm Water Runoff Associated with Construction Activity (General Construction Permit) which covers stormwater runoff requirements for projects where the total amount of ground disturbance during construction exceeds 1 acre. Coverage under a General Construction Permit requires the preparation of a SWPPP and submittal of a Notice of Intent (NOI) to comply with the General Construction Permit. The SWPPP includes a description of BMPs to minimize the discharge of pollutants from the sites during construction. Typical BMPs include temporary soil stabilization measures (e.g., mulching and seeding), storing materials and equipment to ensure that spills or leaks cannot enter the storm drain system or stormwater, and using filtering mechanisms at drop inlets to prevent contaminants from entering storm drains. Typical post-construction management practices include street sweeping and cleaning stormwater drain inlet structures. The NOI includes site-specific information and the certification of compliance with the terms of the General Construction Permit.

Local

County of Imperial General Plan

The Water Element and the Conservation and Open Space Element of the General Plan contain policies and programs, created to ensure water resources are preserved and protected. Table 3.8-2 identifies the General Plan policies and programs for water quality and flood hazards that are relevant to the project and summarizes the project’s consistency with the General Plan. While this EIR analyzes the project’s consistency with the General Plan pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(d), the Imperial County Board of Supervisors ultimately determines consistency with the General Plan.

Table 3.8-2. Project Consistency with Applicable General Plan Policies

General Plan Policies	Consistency with General Plan	Analysis
<i>Conservation and Open Space Element</i>		
Goal 6: The County will conserve, protect, and enhance water resources in the County.	Consistent	The proposed project would protect water quality during construction through compliance with Imperial County design and detention requirements and the NPDES General Construction Permit, as well as preparation and implementation of project-specific SWPPP, which will incorporate the requirements referenced in the State Regulatory Framework, design features, and BMPs.



Table 3.8-2. Project Consistency with Applicable General Plan Policies

General Plan Policies	Consistency with General Plan	Analysis
Objective 6.3: Protect and improve water quality and quantity for all water bodies in Imperial County.	Consistent	The proposed project would protect water quality during construction through compliance with the NPDES General Construction Permit, SWPPP, and BMPs. Implementation of Mitigation Measure HYD-2 would require the project to incorporate post-construction BMPs into the project's drainage plan. The proposed project will be designed to include site design, source control, and treatment control BMPs. The use of source control, site design, and treatment BMPs would result in a decrease potential for storm water pollution.
Program: Structural development normally shall be prohibited in the designated floodways. Only structures which comply with specific development standards should be permitted in the floodplain.	Consistent	The project does not contain a residential component nor would it place housing or other structures within a 100-year flood hazard area.
Water Element		
Policy: Adoption and implementation of ordinances, policies, and guidelines which assure the safety of County ground and surface waters from toxic or hazardous materials and/or wastes.	Consistent	The project would preserve ground and surface water quality from hazardous materials and wastes during construction, operation and decommissioning activities. The proposed project would protect water quality during construction through compliance with NPDES General Construction Permit, SWPPP, which will incorporate the requirements referenced in the State Regulatory Framework and BMPs. Implementation of Mitigation Measure HYD-2 would require the project to incorporate post-construction BMPs into the project's drainage plan. The proposed project will be designed to include site design, source control, and treatment control BMPs. The use of source control, site design, and treatment BMPs would result in a decrease potential for storm water pollution. It is anticipated that project decommissioning activities would be subject to similar, or more stringent ground and surface water regulations than those currently required.
Program: The County of Imperial shall make every reasonable effort to limit or preclude the contamination or degradation of all groundwater and surface water resources in the County.	Consistent	Mitigation measures will require that the applicant of the project prepare a site-specific drainage plan and water quality management plan to minimize adverse effects to local water resources.

Table 3.8-2. Project Consistency with Applicable General Plan Policies

General Plan Policies	Consistency with General Plan	Analysis
Program: All development proposals brought before the County of Imperial shall be reviewed for potential adverse effects on water quality and quantity and shall be required to implement appropriate mitigation measures for any significant impacts.	Consistent	See response for Water Element Policy above.

Source: County of Imperial 2016; County of Imperial 1997b

County of Imperial Land Use Ordinance, Title 9

The County’s Ordinance Code provides specific direction for the protection of water resources. Applicable ordinance requirements are contained in Division 10, Building, Sewer and Grading Regulations, and summarized below.

Chapter 10 – Grading Regulations. Section 91010.02 of the Ordinance Code outlines conditions required for issuance of a Grading Permit. These specific conditions include:

1. If the proposed grading, excavation or earthwork construction is of irrigatable land, said grading will not cause said land to be unfit for agricultural use.
2. The depth of the grading, excavation or earthwork construction will not preclude the use of drain tiles in irrigated lands.
3. The grading, excavation or earthwork construction will not extend below the water table of the immediate area.
4. Where the transition between the grading plane and adjacent ground has a slope less than the ratio of 1.5 feet on the horizontal plane to 1 foot on the vertical plane, the plans and specifications will provide for adequate safety precautions.

Imperial County Engineering Design Guidelines Manual for the Preparation and Checking of Street Improvement, Drainage and Grading Plans within Imperial County

Based on the guidance contained in the County’s *Engineering Guidelines Design Guidelines Manual for the Preparation and Checking of Street Improvement, Drainage and Grading Plans within Imperial County* (2008), the following drainage requirements would be applicable to the project.

III A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. All drainage design and requirements are recommended to be in accordance with the IID “Draft” Hydrology Manual or other recognized source with approval by the County Engineer and based on full development of upstream tributary basins. Another source is the Caltrans I-D-F curves for the Imperial Valley.
3. Permanent drainage facilities and ROW, including access, shall be provided from development to point of satisfactory disposal.
4. Retention volume on retention or detention basins should have a total volume capacity for a three (3) inch minimum precipitation covering the entire site with no C reduction factors.

Volume can be considered by a combination of basin size and volume considered within parking and/or landscaping areas.

There is no guarantee that a detention basin outletting to an IID facility or other storm drain system will not back up should the facility be full and unable to accept the project runoff. This provides the safety factor from flooding by ensuring each development can handle a minimum 3-inch precipitation over the project site.

8. The developer shall submit a drainage study and specifications for improvements of all drainage easements, culverts, drainage structures, and drainage channels to the Department of Public Works for approval. Unless specifically waived herein, required plans and specifications shall provide a drainage system capable of handling and disposing of all surface waters originating within the subdivision and all surface waters that may flow onto the subdivision from adjacent lands. Said drainage system shall include any easements and structures required by the Department of Public Works or the affected Utility Agency to properly handle the drainage on-site and off-site. The report should detail any vegetation and trash/debris removal, as well as address any standing water.
9. Hydrology and hydraulic calculations for determining the storm system design shall be provided to the satisfaction of the Director, Department of Public Works. When appropriate, water surface profiles and adequate field survey cross-section data may also be required.
11. The County is implementing a storm water quality program as required by the SWRCB, which may modify or add to the requirements and guidelines presented elsewhere in this document. This can include ongoing monitoring of water quality of storm drain runoff, implementation of BMPs to reduce storm water quality impacts downstream or along adjacent properties. Attention is directed to the need to reduce any potential of vectors, mosquitoes, or standing water.
12. A Drainage Report is required for all developments in the County. It shall include a project description, project setting including discussions of existing and proposed conditions, any drainage issues related to the site, summary of the findings or conclusions, off-site hydrology, onsite hydrology, hydraulic calculations and a hydrology map.

Imperial Irrigation District

The IID is an irrigation district organized under the California Irrigation District Law, codified in Section 20500 et seq. of the California Water Code. Critical functions of IID include diversion and delivery of Colorado River water to the Imperial Valley, operation and maintenance of the drainage canals and facilities, including those in the project area, and generation and distribution of electricity. Several policy documents govern IID operations and are summarized below:

- The Law of the River and historical Colorado River decisions, agreements and contracts
- The Quantification Settlement Agreement and Transfer Agreements
- The Definite Plan, now referred to as the Systems Conservation Plan, which defines the rigorous agricultural water conservation practices being implemented by growers and IID to meet the Quantification Settlement Agreement commitments
- The Equitable Distribution Plan, which defines how IID will prevent overruns and stay within the cap on the Colorado River water rights

- Existing IID standards and guidelines for evaluation of new development and define IID's role as a responsible agency and wholesaler of water

Integrated Water Resources Management Plan

In relation to the project, IID maintains regulation over the drainage of water into their drains, including the design requirements of stormwater retention basins. IID requires that retention basins be sized to handle an entire rainfall event in case the IID system is at capacity. Additionally, IID requires that outlets to IID facilities be no larger than 12 inches in diameter and must contain a backflow prevention device (IID 2009).

3.8.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Thresholds of Significance

Based on CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, project impacts related to hydrology/water quality are considered significant if any of the following occur:

- Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade groundwater water quality
- Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin
- Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:
 - Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site
 - Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite
 - Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff
 - Impede or redirect flood flows
- In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation
- Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan

Methodology

The drainage design will be conducted in accordance with the County of Imperial's design criteria, which establishes that 100 percent of the 100-year storm (3 inches of rain) will be stored on-site and released into the IID drainage system using existing drainage connections.

Impact Analysis – Solar Energy Facility and Gen-Tie

Impact 3.8-1 Would the project violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade groundwater water quality?

Construction

Construction of the project includes site preparation, foundation construction, erection of major equipment and structures, installation of electrical systems, control systems, and startup/ testing. In addition, the construction of transmission lines, utility pole pads, conductors, and associated structures will be required.

During the construction phase, sedimentation and erosion can occur because of tracking from earthmoving equipment, erosion and subsequent runoff of soil, or improperly designed stockpiles. The utilization of proper erosion and sediment control BMPs is critical in preventing discharge to surface waters/drains. The project would employ proper SWPPP practices to minimize any discharges in order to meet the Best Available Technology/Best Conventional Technology standard set forth in the Construction General Permit. has the potential to affect surface water quality. Many different types of hazardous compounds will be used during the construction phase, with proper application, management, and containment being of high importance. Poorly managed construction materials can lead to the possibility for exposure of potential contaminants to precipitation. When this occurs, these visible and/or non-visible constituents become entrained in storm water runoff. If they are not intercepted or are left uncontrolled, the polluted runoff would otherwise freely sheet flow from the project to the IID Imperial Valley Drains and could result in the accumulation of these pollutants in the receiving waters. This is considered a potentially significant impact. With the implementation of Mitigation Measure HYD-1, impacts on surface water quality as attributable to the project would be reduced to a less than significant level. Prior to construction and grading activities, the project applicant is required to file an NOI with the SWRCB to comply with the General NPDES Construction Permit and prepare a SWPPP, which addresses the measures that would be included during construction or the project to minimize and control construction and post-construction runoff to the “maximum extent practicable.” In addition, NPDES permits require the implementation of BMPs that achieve a level of pollution control to the maximum extent practical. With the implementation of Mitigation Measures HYD-1, impacts on surface water quality as attributable to the project would be reduced to a less than significant level through the inclusion of focused BMPs for the protection of surface water resources. Monitoring and contingency response measures would be included to verify compliance with water quality objectives for all surface waters crossed during construction. In addition, given that site decommissioning would result in similar activities as identified for construction, these impacts could also occur in the future during site restoration activities.

Operation

As runoff flows over developed surfaces, water can entrain a variety of potential pollutants including, but not limited to, oil and grease, pesticides, trace metals, and nutrients. These pollutants can become suspended in runoff and carried to receiving waters. These effects are commonly referred to as non-point source water quality impacts.

Long-term operation of the solar facility poses a limited threat to surface water quality after the completion of construction. The project would be subject to the County’s Grading Regulations as specified in Section 91010.02 of the Ordinance Code. However, since the project site is located in unincorporated Imperial County and not subject to a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System or

NPDES General Industrial Permit, there is no regulatory mechanism in place to address post-construction water quality concerns. Based on this consideration, the project has the potential to result in both direct and indirect water quality impacts that could be significant. Implementation of Mitigation Measure HYD-2 would require the project to incorporate post-construction BMPs into the project’s drainage plan. The proposed project will be designed to include site design, source control, and treatment control BMPs, as described below. The use of source control, site design, and treatment BMPs would result in a decrease potential for storm water pollution.

Site Design BMPs. The project will be designed to include site design BMPs, which reduce runoff, prevent storm water pollution associated with the project, and conserve natural areas onsite. Table 3.8-3 lists the various site design BMPs.

Table 3.8-3. Site Design Best Management Practices

Design Concept		Description
1	Minimize Impervious Footprint	The project site will include a significant amount of undeveloped land and pervious area. The footprint for the solar arrays will be predominately pervious ground. A minimal amount of Class II base paving for access roads and parking will be constructed.
2	Conserve Natural Areas	Only a small amount of existing site area can be classified as natural landscape and will only be disturbed in necessary areas at the project.
3	Protect Slopes and Channels	The project site and surrounding areas is comprised of extremely flat topography. Erosion of slopes due to stabilization problems is not a concern.
4	Minimize Directly Connected Impervious Areas	No storm drain will be constructed onsite. The site layout does not change the existing drainage pattern.

Source: Appendix J of this EIR

Source Control BMPs. Source control BMPs (both structural and non-structural) means land use or site planning practices, or structures that aim to prevent urban runoff pollution by reducing the potential for contamination at the source of pollution. Source control BMPs minimize the contact between pollutants and urban runoff. Table 3.8-4 identifies source control BMPs that would be applicable to the proposed project.

Table 3.8-4. Source Control Best Management Practices

Design Concept		Description
1	Design Trash Storage Areas to Reduce Pollution Introduction	Any outdoor trash storage areas will be designed not to allow run-on from adjoining areas, screened or walled to prevent off-site transport of trash.
2	Activity Restrictions	Restrictions include activities that have the potential to create adverse impacts on water quality.
3	Non-storm Water Discharges	Illegal dumping educational materials as well as spill response materials will be provided to employees.
4	Outdoor Loading and Unloading	Material handling will be conducted in a manner as to prevent any storm water pollution.



Table 3.8-4. Source Control Best Management Practices

Design Concept		Description
5	Spill Prevention, Control, and Cleanup	The project will require a Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure Plan, and a Hazardous Materials Business Plan in accordance with Federal and State requirements.
6	Education	Employees will receive materials for storm water pollution prevention in the form of brochures and other information in a format approved by the County of Imperial.
7	Integrated Pest Management	If any pesticide is required onsite, the need for pesticide use in the project design will be reduced by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping pests out of buildings using barriers, screens, and caulking • Physical pest elimination techniques, such as squashing, trapping, washing or pruning out pests • Relying on natural enemies to eat pests • Proper use of pesticides as a last line of defense
8	Vehicle and Equipment Fueling, Cleaning, and Repair	All vehicles will be serviced offsite whenever possible. If servicing is required onsite, it must be conducted in an area isolated from storm drain inlets or drainage ditch inlets. The area must be bermed and precluded from run on. Any spillage must be fully contained and captured and disposed of per County of Imperial Hazardous Waste requirements.
9	Waste Handling and Disposal	Materials will be disposed of in accordance with Imperial County Hazardous Material Management guidelines and will be sent to appropriate disposal facilities. Under no circumstances shall any waste or hazardous materials be stored outside without secondary containment.

Source: Appendix J of this EIR

Treatment Control BMPs. The proposed project will incorporate post-construction Low Impact Development Treatment Control BMPs, including but not limited to infiltration trenches or bioswales, which shall be investigated and integrated into the project layout to the maximum extent practicable. The drainage plan shall provide both short-term and long-term drainage solutions to ensure the proper sequencing of drainage facilities and treatment of runoff generated from project impervious surfaces prior to off-site discharge.

The proposed project shall develop a long-term maintenance plan and implemented to support the functionality of treatment control BMPs. The facility layout shall also include sufficient container storage and on-site containment and pollution-control devices for drainage facilities to avoid the off-site release of water quality pollutants, including, but not limited to oil and grease, fertilizers, treatment chemicals, and sediment (Appendix J of this EIR).

Mitigation Measure(s)

HYD-1 Prepare SWPPP and Implement BMPs Prior to Construction and Site Restoration. The project applicant or its contractor shall prepare a SWPPP specific to the project and be responsible for securing coverage under SWRCB’s NPDES stormwater permit for general construction activity (Order 2009-0009-DWQ). The SWPPP shall identify specific actions and BMPs relating to the prevention of stormwater pollution from project-related construction sources by identifying a practical

sequence for site restoration, BMP implementation, contingency measures, responsible parties, and agency contacts. The SWPPP shall reflect localized surface hydrological conditions and shall be reviewed and approved by the appropriate agency prior to commencement of work and shall be made conditions of the contract with the contractor selected to build and decommission the project. The SWPPP shall incorporate control measures in the following categories:

- Soil stabilization and erosion control practices (e.g., hydroseeding, erosion control blankets, mulching)
- Sediment control practices (e.g., temporary sediment basins, fiber rolls)
- Temporary and post-construction on- and off-site runoff controls
- Special considerations and BMPs for water crossings and drainages
- Monitoring protocols for discharge(s) and receiving waters, with emphasis place on the following water quality objectives: dissolved oxygen, floating material, oil and grease, potential of hydrogen (pH), and turbidity
- Waste management, handling, and disposal control practices
- Corrective action and spill contingency measures
- Agency and responsible party contact information
- Training procedures that shall be used to ensure that workers are aware of permit requirements and proper installation methods for BMPs specified in the SWPPP

The SWPPP shall be prepared by a Qualified SWPPP Practitioner and/or Qualified SWPPP Developer with BMPs selected to achieve maximum pollutant removal and that represent the best available technology that is economically achievable. Emphasis for BMPs shall be placed on controlling discharges of oxygen-depleting substances, floating material, oil and grease, acidic or caustic substances or compounds, and turbidity. BMPs for soil stabilization and erosion control practices and sediment control practices will also be required. Performance and effectiveness of these BMPs shall be determined either by visual means where applicable (i.e., observation of above-normal sediment release), or by actual water sampling in cases where verification of contaminant reduction or elimination, (inadvertent petroleum release) is required to determine adequacy of the measure.

HYD-2 Incorporate Post-Construction Runoff BMPs into Project Drainage Plan. The project Drainage Plan shall adhere to the County's Engineering Guidelines Manual, IID "Draft" Hydrology Manual, or other recognized source with approval by the County Engineer to control and manage the on- and off-site discharge of stormwater to existing drainage systems. Infiltration basins will be integrated into the Drainage Plan to the maximum extent practical. The Drainage Plan shall provide both short- and long-term drainage solutions to ensure the proper sequencing of drainage facilities and management of runoff generated from project impervious surfaces as necessary.

Significance after Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measure HYD-1, impacts on surface water quality as attributable to the project would be reduced to a less than significant level through the inclusion of focused BMPs for the protection of surface water resources. Monitoring and contingency response measures would be included to verify compliance with water quality objectives for all surface waters crossed during construction.

With the implementation of Mitigation Measure HYD-2, potential water quality impacts resulting from post-construction discharges during operation for the project would be reduced to a less than significant level. Implementation of Mitigation Measure HYD-2 would require the project to incorporate post-construction BMPs into the project's drainage plan. The use of source control, site design, and treatment BMPs would result in a decrease potential for storm water pollution.

Impact 3.8-2 Would the project substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

The proposed project may involve the construction of a groundwater well and use of groundwater for construction, and potentially limited operational use, of the project. As described in Chapter 2 Project Description, the construction of a groundwater well requires approval of a CUP. Approval of the CUP would be contingent upon the availability of groundwater to serve the project and ability to recharge the aquifer so that groundwater supplies are not substantially decreased by the proposed project. As discussed in Section 3.11 Utilities/Service Systems, adequate groundwater resources are available to serve the project.

Further, groundwater recharge in the area will not be significantly affected because of the fact that the majority of the project site will feature a pervious landscape in both the existing and proposed conditions. Any runoff from solar panel washing would evaporate or percolate through the ground, as a majority of the surfaces in the solar field would remain pervious. Retention basins will also provide infiltration and groundwater recharge. The proposed project would not substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin. No significant impacts on groundwater supply or recharge would occur.

Mitigation Measure(s)

No mitigation measures are required.

Impact 3.8-3 Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:

Result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?

Soil erosion could result during construction of the proposed project in association with grading and earthmoving activities. The project site would be disturbed by construction activities such as grading and clearing as a part of site preparation. To the extent feasible, site preparation would be planned and designed to minimize the amount of earth movement. Compaction of the soil to support building and traffic loads as well as the PV module supports may be required and is dependent on final

engineering design. During construction, erosion would be controlled in accordance with County standards which include preparation, review and approval of a grading plan by the County Engineer; implementation of a Dust Control Plan (Rule 801); and compliance with the NPDES General Construction Permit.

Daily operations and routine maintenance (such as occasional PV panel washing) are not anticipated to increase erosion. During operational activities, soil erosion and sedimentation would be controlled in accordance with the NPDES General Construction Permit and project-specific SWPPP. The project site would remain largely impervious over the operational life of the project.

The project would incorporate on-site storm water retention basins to retain the 100-year, 24-hour storm event of 3 inches over the entire developed area. There would be 5 retention basins to provide 30 af of storage capacity. The basins are located westerly and southerly of the developed area. The off-site runoff will be intercepted by the proposed earthen channel at the northerly and easterly boundaries of the solar energy facility. The earthen channel will convey off-site storm water runoff around the development and discharge in the same manner as existing conditions downstream of the project site to continue its natural course and eventually into the East Highline Canal (Appendix J of this EIR). The proposed project would result in less than significant impacts associated with the alteration of drainage patterns resulting in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site.

Mitigation Measure(s)

No mitigation measures are required.

Impact 3.8-4 Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:

Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite?

The proposed project would incorporate on-site storm water retention basins to retain the 100-year (0.01 percent annual chance of a flood), 24-hour storm event of 3 inches over the entire developed area (28.75 af of runoff volume). Five retention basins would be constructed on the project site to provide 30 af of storage capacity. As shown in Figure 3-3, the retention basins are located immediately adjacent to the west and south of the solar energy facility.

The off-site runoff will be intercepted by the proposed earthen channel at the northerly and easterly boundaries of the solar energy facility. The earthen channel will convey off-site storm water runoff around the development and discharge in the same manner as existing conditions downstream of the project site to continue its natural course and eventually into the East Highline Canal. The proposed earthen channels would provide flood protection to the development from uncontrolled off-site storm runoff. The project will be designed to meet County of Imperial storage requirements (100 percent of the 100-year storm (3 inches of rain)) (refer to the County's *Engineering Guidelines Design Guidelines Manual for the Preparation and Checking of Street Improvement, Drainage and Grading Plans within Imperial County* (2008) for storm water runoff, which will result in an impoundment of runoff in excess of the anticipated volume of runoff to be generated by the 100-year storm event. Therefore, the proposed project would result in no significant impacts associated with the alteration of drainage patterns resulting in on- or off-site flooding

Mitigation Measure(s)

No mitigation measures are required.

Impact 3.8-5 Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:

Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?

The proposed project is not anticipated to generate a significant increase in the amount of runoff water from water use involving solar panel washing. Water will continue to percolate through the ground, as a majority of the surfaces on the project site will remain pervious. The proposed project would not create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff. This is considered a less than significant impact.

Mitigation Measure(s)

No mitigation measures are required.

Impact 3.8-6 Would the project substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:

Impede or redirect flood flows?

According to the FEMA's FIRM (Map Number 06025C0425C) (FEMA 2008), the proposed solar energy facility, gen-tie line, and access roads located on the western portion of the project site are located in Zone X (unshaded). The FEMA Zone X (unshaded) designation is an area determined to be outside the 0.2 percent annual chance floodplain.

According to the FEMA FIRM (Map Number 06025C0450C) (FEMA 2008), the proposed eastern access road that would connect to Gas Line Road is located in a 100-year flood zone (0.01 percent annual chance) (Zone A). The proposed eastern access road would not involve the addition of structures which could impede or redirect flood flows. In addition, the proposed access road would be constructed with an all-weather surface allowing runoff to continue to percolate into the ground. Therefore, the proposed project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would impede or redirect flood flows, and impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measure(s)

No mitigation measures are required.

Impact 3.8-7 In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, would the project risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

The project site is not located near any large bodies of water. The Salton Sea is located approximately 10 miles west of the project site. Because of the distance, the Salton Sea does not pose a particularly significant danger of inundation from seiche or tsunami as related to the project site. Furthermore, the project site is over 100 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean. In addition, the project site is relatively flat. Therefore, there is no potential for the project site to be inundated by seiches or tsunamis.

Mitigation Measure(s)

No mitigation measures are required.

Impact 3.8-8 Would the project conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

As described under Impact 3.8-1 above, with the implementation of Mitigation Measure HYD-1, impacts on surface water quality as attributable to the project would be reduced to a less than significant level through the inclusion of focused BMPs for the protection of surface water resources. Implementation of Mitigation Measure HYD-2 would require the project to incorporate post-construction BMPs into the project's drainage plan. The use of source control, site design, and treatment BMPs would result in a decrease potential for storm water pollution. Therefore, the proposed project would not pose a significant threat to local surface water features or shallow groundwater resources. Implementation of Mitigation Measures HYD-1 and HYD-2 would reduce impacts to a level less than significant.

Mitigation Measure(s)

No additional mitigation measures beyond Mitigation Measures HYD-1 and HYD-2 are required.

Significance after Mitigation

With the implementation of Mitigation Measures HYD-1 and HYD-2, the potential water quality impacts resulting during construction and operation of the project would be reduced to a level less than significant.

Impact Analysis – Fiberoptic Cable

The proposed project includes the installation of approximately two miles of fiberoptic cable to connect the proposed substation to the existing Niland Substation. The installation process involves aerial stringing of the fiber optic cable between existing transmission poles. No grading would be required. No new transmission structures would be required to install the fiberoptic cable. The proposed fiberoptic cable would result in no significant hydrology and water quality impacts.

3.8.4 Decommissioning/Restoration and Residual Impacts

Decommissioning/Restoration

Decommissioning and restoration activities would result in similar impacts on hydrology and water quality as would occur during construction of the proposed project. The primary water quality issue

associated with decommissioning/restoration would be potential impacts on surface water quality, as the decommissioning activities would be similar to construction activities, and would be considered a significant impact. However, during decommissioning, soil erosion would be controlled in accordance with NPDES General Construction Permit(s) and project-specific SWPPP. Compliance with requirements and best available control technologies in place at the time of decommissioning are anticipated to be similar to, or more stringent than, those currently required. Compliance with all applicable water quality regulations would reduce the project's impacts during decommissioning to a level less than significant. Impacts on other water resource issues, including alteration of drainage patterns, contributing to off-site flooding, impacts on groundwater recharge and supply, would be less than significant. There would be no impact associated with inundation from flooding or mudflows.

Residual

With implementation of the mitigation measures listed above, implementation of the project would not result in any residual significant impacts related to increased risk of flooding from stormwater runoff, from water quality effects from long-term urban runoff, or from short-term alteration of drainages and associated surface water quality and sedimentation. With the implementation of the required mitigation measures during construction and decommissioning of the project, water quality impacts would be minimized to a less than significant level. Based on these circumstances, the project would not result in any residual significant and unmitigable adverse impacts on surface water hydrology and water quality.

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